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NICOLAUS POL DOCTOR 1494

BY

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MAX H. FISCH

At Ludwig Rosenthal's Antiquariat in Munich some forty years ago, Maurice Ettinghausen, fresh from his studies at Oxford and Paris, was learning the business by going over the incunabula in the warehouse at the back of the store. His interest was aroused by a group of incunabula and early sixteenth century books in bindings of stamped brown leather over wooden boards. Inside the front covers was the inscription: "Nicolaus Pol Doctor 1494." Above the inscription in most of the volumes was a list of their contents in the same hand. In several other hands, usually at the top of the first printed page, was the note: "Property of the Collegiate Church of Innichen 1632." There were shelf letters on the tail edges. The group contained about thirty titles, all medical, spanning the half century from 1477 to 1527.

One of Ettinghausen's duties was interviewing English-speaking visitors. Here was an obvious collection to show the physicians among them. He showed it to Dr. Edward Clark Streeter of Boston in 1907, and Streeter bought it for eight hundred dollars.

Twenty years later Ettinghausen, now head of Maggs Bros.' Department of Foreign Books, returned the call in Boston and bought the collection back for five thousand dollars. Maggs Bros. added Pol's 1495 Ketham with two other medical incunabula bound in, and issued in 1929 a *Catalogue of Medical Works from the Library of Dr. Nicolaus Pol,* offering the lot for £2500.

Through a clerical error, Dr. Harvey Cushing did not receive a copy of this catalog, but his nephew Dr. Edward H. Cushing of Cleveland did. He promptly persuaded President Vinson of Western Reserve University to cable for the collection and hold it until the Cleveland Medical Library

[1] A book of the same title will be published shortly by Herbert Reichner for the Cleveland Medical Library Association. It will include a fuller account of Pol's life, a critical text and translation of his guaiac tract, and a short-title catalog of about four hundred and fifty books and manuscripts now known to have belonged to his library, with their present locations. Since the book will be adequately documented, it will suffice here to say that the first six paragraphs of the present paper are based on letters of Dr. Ettinghausen to the author and on correspondence generously placed at his disposal by Dr. Edward H. Cushing and by the Historical Library of the Yale University School of Medicine; the last two paragraphs on examination of the manuscript listed in the *Index Catalogue,* 3d ser., vol. VII, p. 1053, under the head of "Medical tracts"; and the intervening paragraphs on Ferrari's article cited in n. 3 below, and on Arnold Klebs's summaries of the documents used by Ferrari and of some others in the Innsbruck archives.

Association could raise the money. This was soon supplied by a donor who asked to be nameless, and the collection came to rest in the Cleveland Medical Library as a memorial to Mr. Charles H. Bingham.

When Harvey Cushing came to Cleveland in May, 1929, to see if he could " lend a hand to Crile after the catastrophe in the Cleveland Clinic," his nephew told him the news, and he wrote to Streeter: " It is a perfect windfall for them."

The Maggs Bros. catalog had said: " One day there may be sufficient material for a worthy monograph on the distinguished collector of these books, but at present pitifully little is known. . . ." The Cushings set about collecting the material.[2] They enlisted the help, among others, of Arnold Klebs, who had been puzzled by the autograph, " Nicolaus Pol Doctor 1494," ever since meeting it fifteen years before in the Army Medical Library's 1490 edition of Galen. Klebs made inquiries in various directions and finally in 1936 got track of documents in the archives at Innsbruck from which the essential facts of Pol's life could be determined.

Meanwhile, Luigi Ferrari, librarian of St. Mark's in Venice, had visited Innichen to list the Collegiate Church's incunabula for the Italian census. He had found Pol's autograph in 133 volumes containing 169 out of a total of 272 incunabula, and also in 166 out of 309 books of the first two decades of the sixteenth century, and in 25 manuscript volumes as well. He had had the archives at Innsbruck searched just ahead of Klebs, and in October 1936 he reported the results of these and other investigations in an article on Pol, the Collegiate Church of Innichen, and its incunabula.[3] He appended a list of the incunabula, but without distinguishing Pol's from the rest, and without listing the sixteenth century books and the manuscripts.[4]

[2] They also bought most of the Pol books that came on the market. Between 1930 and 1936 Harvey Cushing acquired nine volumes with Pol's *ex libris*, containing eight incunabula and five sixteenth century books. These are now in the Historical Library of the Yale University School of Medicine. The Cleveland Medical Library's collection has grown from 33 to 38, largely on the initiative of Edward H. Cushing, who has one Pol book in his private library as well.

[3] Ferrari, Luigi. Doctor Nicolaus Pol, la Collegiata di S. Candido ed i suoi Incunaboli. *Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti* 96²: 109-169 (1936-37).

[4] Dr. Ferrari has recently supplied a complete list of Pol's books at Innichen (San Candido), and Canon Ferdinand Keim of the Collegiate Church informs me that they came safely through the war and are still intact. Dr. L. Franz of Innsbruck has sent a list of fourteen of Pol's incunabula in the University Library there. The British Museum has at least three of Pol's books, the Army Medical Library 2, the Library of Congress 1, Boston Public 1, University of Chicago 1, Huntington 1, University of Michigan 1, Dresden 1, Vienna 1, Erik Waller 2, and Lathrop Harper a volume containing four extremely rare incunabula. It has not been possible to include in the present paper an

All that was previously known of Pol was that he was the author of a tract on the guaiac treatment of syphilis printed at Venice in 1535 but dated at the end December 19, 1517. On the title page and again in the dedication to Cardinal Matthew Lang, Pol was called (or called himself) "professor of medicine and physician to his sacred imperial majesty." It was not known where he had taught, nor whether the Emperor meant was Maximilian I or Charles V.

The documents brought to light by Ferrari and Klebs tell us nothing of Pol's parentage or of the place or date of his birth, but they suggest that he was born in the Tirol about 1470 or a little earlier. On September 26, 1487, he entered the service of Duke Sigismund at Innsbruck, with the miserable stipend of twenty florins a year. In Sigismund's account books for 1488, 1489 and 1490, he appears as court distiller or pharmacist. After Sigismund's abdication in favor of Maximilian in 1490, Pol continued to serve him for at least a year, as appears from two pharmacy bills of 1491, one for an enema administered to the Duke on March 15, and the other for 2½ ounces of pills on the 20th of the same month. We then lose track of him for four years and nearly eight months. On November 3, 1495, he was appointed physician to Maximilian and to his governors at Innsbruck, where Pol agreed to reside and be on call. It is evident therefore that in the intervening period he had studied medicine and that the year celebrated in his *ex libris* autograph was that in which he had obtained his degree.[5] His salary as physician was 100 florins a year. Though still not large, it was five times what he had received as court pharmacist. It is probable that he served the Emperor only when the Emperor's court was at or near Innsbruck, but that he was available at any time to the local governors or to imperial emissaries passing through. His appointment was confirmed on April 26, 1500, and again on May 9 with the added provision of two horses whenever they should be needed in the performance of his duties. Possessing as yet no seal of his own, Pol was obliged to have a court official affix his to this last document.

There was at that time no university at Innsbruck, but Pol seems to have taken students and to have acquired a reputation for learning. We hear

analysis of Pol's library in relation to other private medical libraries of his time. The proportion of theological and philosophical books was high. Ramon Lul was his favorite author. Further details will be given in the book referred to in n. 1.

[5] It is probable, however, that the year 1494 had some additional, perhaps symbolic, significance for Pol. One of his marginalia dates from that year the rapid spread of syphilis, which was the outstanding problem of medicine in his time, and from the treatment of which (if not more directly from the guaiac trade itself) he must have derived the income that enabled him to accumulate so splendid a library.

of a monk who, before entering the monastery of SS. Ulrich and Afra at Augsburg in 1503, had studied with Pol at Innsbruck. The phrase " professor of medicine " may mean no more than that.

In a document of November 6, 1517, Pol first appears as a man of property, owning a house on the Silbergasse in Innsbruck and receiving a rental from it. That was six weeks before he completed his tract on the guaiac cure. To this document he did at last affix a seal of his own, but it has since disappeared.

We find no record of Pol for the next fifteen years, but it would seem that he passed from Maximilian's service to that of Charles V in 1519, and that he continued to live at Innsbruck. Two documents in the archives there serve to fix the year of his death. On March 22, 1532, he received and paid for a shipment of wine from a provisioner at Feldkirch in Voralberg. On November 19 of the same year, the treasurer at Innsbruck was ordered to pay his widow Apollonia, for a period of five years, an annual pension of 50 florins, in consideration of the long, faithful and diligent services of her husband.[6] Pol must therefore have died between March and November, 1532, at an age of perhaps sixty-five years, thirty-seven of which he had spent as physician to emperors.[7]

Pol's son John became a physician after him but achieved no such distinction. He died at Znaim, leaving behind a manuscript collection of recipes, a veritable encyclopedia of pharmacy and hygiene, compiled by his father, with some additions of his own. The City Council of Znaim, to whose custody it passed, lent it to one Dr. Wolfgang Käppler as security for a debt they owed him. Käppler copied and enlarged it and gave it the title, " A most useful compendium containing the causes and remedies of the various diseases." In his preface he speaks of the original compiler as having been " vastly learned " and a councilor as well as physician to

[6] From the same document we learn that Pol left minor children, and from another that in 1536 his widow was administering a house he had owned on the Kugelgasse at Innsbruck. She was still living in 1541, for a note in one of the volumes at Innichen says it was bought from her in that year.

[7] The Venetian diary of Marin Sanudo records, among other personages arriving in Venice from Treviso with troops of Charles V on October 23, 1532, a " Doctor Polo, His Imperial Majesty's preacher." Though we have found no other mention of Pol's having served in that capacity, it is not inconceivable that he did so. Theology bulks even larger than medicine in his library; theological study often went with medical practice in his time; and a dual rôle of court physician and chaplain was not without precedent. Travel with the court or army of Charles V in one or both capacities between 1519 and 1532 would help to explain Pol's absence from Innsbruck records of that period. If the Venetian visitor was indeed our Doctor Pol, it would follow that he died late in October or early in November 1532, probably in Italy and perhaps at Venice, where, three years later, his guaiac tract was first printed.

Maximilian I. Aside from Pol's guaiac tract and the marginalia in his books, this is the only surviving product of his literary activity.

Of the guaiac tract itself there was no trace earlier than the edition of 1535 until a manuscript copy of 1519 was recently discovered in the Army Medical Library. In that year one Ippolito of Montereale, a medical student at Perugia, was living in the home of his teacher Lorenzo of Sassoferrato and making copies for his own use of various medical manuscripts in Lorenzo's possession. On the 13th of May, 1519, he transcribed Pol's tract from a manuscript copy which Lorenzo had received from Alberto Pio of Carpi, Maximilian's advocate at the Papal See, to whom it had been sent as a gift from Germany, perhaps by Pol himself, more likely by his patron Cardinal Lang.[8]

Following Pol's tract in Ippolito's manuscript there is a recipe for the guaiac treatment from Seville, Spain, which Lorenzo had obtained on June 22, 1516, from a spice dealer who refused to show it except to his intimate friends. This latter document now supersedes Pol's tract as the earliest surviving record of the use of guaiac in the treatment of syphilis.

Postscript: When the above paper was already in type, a letter from Dr. L. Franz of Innsbruck called my attention to an article by Ernst Zinner in the *Bericht der Naturforschenden Gesellschaft in Bamberg* (v. 28, 1939) which gives the substance (p. 94) of a letter from Pol to Veit Bild in the Diocesan Library at Augsburg. Bild was the monk of SS. Ulrich and Afra who had studied with Pol at Innsbruck. He wrote Pol in 1517 asking how the magnetic declination for Augsburg could be ascertained. Pol replied on June 15, 1520, pleading domestic misfortune and illness in excuse of his long delay. Without saying how it had been determined, he gave 11° as the declination at Innsbruck and said the declination at Augsburg would be nearly the same. Pursuing this lead, I have compared Benedikt Kraft's catalog (1934) of the manuscripts in the Diocesan Library with Placidus Braun's (1791-96) of those formerly at Ulrich and Afra. It appears that the Diocesan Library's manuscript 81, if it has survived the war, should contain eight letters from Bild to Pol and five from Pol to Bild. On further search, I find that brief summaries of these and other letters in the same manuscript were appended to an essay on Bild by Alfred Schröder in 1893 (*Historischer Verein für Schwaben und Neuburg, Zeitschrift* 20: 173-227). I am endeavoring to secure copies of the letters themselves.

[8] This provenance is made doubly interesting by the fact that, appended to the 1535 edition of Pol's tract, there is an account by Alberto Pio of the German method of making beer.